



Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Testimony before the Montgomery County Council
Jerry Godwin, Vice-Chair - Supporting 46-09
January 12, 2010

Good evening. My name is Jerry Godwin and I am the Vice-Chair of the Commission on Veterans Affairs and testifying on their behalf this evening. The Commission very much appreciates the work of the County to address the critical issue of unemployment of individuals with disabilities including the many disabled veterans who are not employed.

- The Commission strongly supports the County's proposed hiring preference for individuals with targeted disabilities. In addition to those certified by DORS, this hiring preference would also apply to disabled war veterans who are certified by the Veterans Administration as having disability rating of 30% or more.
- Here is some information for you to consider in support of this bill. In early 2008, The Community Foundation joined with Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett to commission a study to determine the feasibility of a community-based nonprofit response to complement government and national nonprofit efforts to ease the hardships of deployment to Afghanistan and Iraq and post-deployment reintegration for troops and families in the National Capital Region.
- In their report published in October, 2008 they cited the following employment issues regarding veterans: Guard and reserve soldiers may find their former jobs no longer exist, or their employers have downsized, folded, merged or relocated.
- It is "very common" for soldiers to file for bankruptcy following deployments and injuries. Some veterans have fallen into debt waiting for compensation from the VA for their disability claims.
- Because of frustration with government agencies, 77% of veterans say they don't even bother to seek reemployment help.
- 18% of veterans recently back from deployments are unemployed. Of those who do work, 25% earn less than \$21,000.
- An estimated 36,967 soldiers have "ever deployed" and an estimated 6,020 are "currently deployed" to Afghanistan and/or Iraq. Of these, 5,320 have "ever deployed" and 931 are "currently deployed" from Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. 3,101 have "ever deployed" and 509 are "currently deployed" from DC. 28,546 have "ever deployed" and 4,580 are "currently deployed" from Northern Virginia.
- There are more than 700 soldiers and 1000 family members who are in the area at any one time by virtue of the specialized care provided by the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda and Walter Reed Army Medical Center on the border of DC and Silver Spring. The average length of stay for most of the wounded warriors at Walter Reed is more than 380 days.
- The military reports that 208 soldiers from our region have died in the two wars and 1,218 have been wounded in action.

We thank you for your consideration of this important employment bill that could help to bring opportunity to veterans who have unselfishly served our country.